

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 IO-14 ISO-00 ARA-14 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
H-02 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 SP-02
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R 091642Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY BONN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9263
INFO AMCONSUL BREMEN
AMCONSUL DUSSELDORF
AMCONSUL FRANKFURT
AMCONSUL HAMBURG
AMCONSUL MUNICH
AMCONSUL STUTTGART
USMISSION USBERLIN
USMISSION USNATO
USMISSION GENEVA
AMEMBASSY BERLIN
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

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USEEC ALSO FOR EMBASSY

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ELAB, GW
SUBJECT: DGB CONVENTION DETERMINES UNION POLICY FOR NEXT
FOUR YEARS

REF: (A) BONN 8905; (B) BONN 10181; (C) A-97

SUMMARY: THE GERMAN TRADE UNION FEDERATION (DGB) HELD
ITS 11TH REGULAR CONVENTION IN HAMBURG FROM MAY 21
TO 27, WITH 504 DELEGATES FROM 17 AFFILIATED UNIONS
REPRESENTING MORE THAN 7.6 MILLION MEMBERS. THE GERMAN
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POLICE UNION (GEWERKSCHAFT DER POLIZEI - GDP), AFFILIA-
TED SINCE APRIL 1, 1978, WAS REPRESENTED FOR THE FIRST
TIME AT A DGB CONVENTION. HIGHLIGHTS OF THE CONVENTION
WERE THE SPEECHES BY FEDERAL PRESIDENT SCHEEL, WHO
OPENED THE CONVENTION, CHANCELLOR SCHMIDT, LABOR
MINISTER EHRENBERG, SPD CHAIRMAN WILLY BRANDT, AND
DGB PRESIDENT VETTER (REF B). THE DELEGATES DECIDED

TO HOLD NATIONAL CONVENTIONS AND ELECTIONS OF OFFICERS AT FOUR-YEAR INTERVALS IN THE FUTURE RATHER THAN EVERY THREE YEARS. DGB PRESIDENT VETTER AND THE OTHER EIGHT MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD WERE REELECTED WITHOUT OPPOSITION. THE CONVENTION APPROVED ABOUT 400 RESOLUTIONS ESTABLISHING TRADE UNION POLICY FOR THE NEXT FOUR YEARS (REF A). DOMESTIC ISSUES DOMINATED THE DISCUSSIONS WITH UNEMPLOYMENT THE NUMBER ONE CONCERN. A "MISHAP" OCCURRED WHEN THE DELEGATES, AGAINST THE WISHES OF THE UNION LEADERSHIP, PASSED A RESOLUTION PROPOSED BY THE DGB YOUTH COMMITTEE WHICH ADVOCATED THE 35-HOUR WEEK, BUT WHICH ALMOST UNNOTICED CALLED FOR THE NATIONALIZATION OF PRIVATE BANKING AND INSURANCE COMPANIES. A HASTY MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD WAS CALLED TO FIND A WAY OUT OF THIS EMBARRASSMENT. THE DELEGATES AGREED TO SUBSTITUTE A MODIFIED VERSION WHICH EXCLUDED THE SECTION ON NATIONALIZATION. A LARGE NUMBER OF FOREIGN TRADE UNIONISTS ATTENDED THE CONVENTION. REPRESENTATIVES OF SEVERAL FOREIGN DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS, INCLUDING AMBASSADOR STOESSEL, WERE WELCOMED AS GUESTS AT THE OPENING SESSION. END SUMMARY.

1. ELECTION RESULTS:

VETTER WAS REELECTED DGB PRESIDENT WITH MORE VOTES THAN HE RECEIVED IN 1975. LIKEWISE, HIS TWO VICE
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PRESIDENTS, MARIA WEBER AND GERD MUHR, ALSO DID BETTER THAN IN 1975. WEBER ALONG WITH MARTIN HEISS ARE THE TWO CDU MEMBERS OF THE DGB EXECUTIVE BOARD. BOTH RECEIVED MANY MORE VOTES THAN LAST TIME WHICH DEMONSTRATED A COMMITMENT BY SPD DELEGATES TO THE CONCEPT OF A POLITICALLY UNIFIED TRADE UNION MOVEMENT.

THE HIGHEST VOTE-GETTER AFTER VETTER WAS EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBER ALOIS PFEIFFER WHOSE NAME WILL INEVITABLY BE INCLUDED AMONG THOSE BEING SUGGESTED AS POSSIBLE SUCCESSORS TO HEINZ OSKAR VETTER FOUR YEARS FROM NOW.

2. SCHEEL SPEECH:

FEDERAL PRESIDENT SCHEEL IN HIS ADDRESS OPENING THE CONFERENCE ENDORSED THE RIGHT TO A JOB, BUT WARNED THAT THIS SHOULD NOT BE INTERPRETED AS THE RIGHT TO A SPECIFIC JOB. HE SUGGESTED THAT THE FREEDOM OF CHOICE IN EDUCATION AND OCCUPATION IMPLIES INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY AND IN SEEKING WORK. SCHEEL URGED WORKERS TO BE MORE FLEXIBLE IN THE FACE OF TECHNOLOGICAL PROGRESS AND CALLED FOR A GREATER MOBILITY AMONG WORKERS TO MEET THE CHALLENGE.

SCHEEL'S COMMENTS WERE NOT FAVORABLY RECEIVED BY DELEGATES WHO THOUGHT THEY LACKED BALANCE. DELEGATES CONSIDERED THAT IF HE WAS GOING TO MAKE REFERENCES TO THE IMPORTANCE OF TECHNOLOGICAL PROGRESS AND THE RESPONSIBILITY OF UNIONS TO SUPPORT TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT THAT HE SHOULD HAVE AT LEAST REFERRED TO THE RESPONSIBILITY OF EMPLOYERS TO SUPPORT SOCIAL PROGRESS. DGB PRESIDENT VETTER SUMMED UP THE FEELING OF THE CONGRESS WHEN HE SAID IN RESPONSE TO SCHEEL'S REMARKS THAT "TECHNICAL PROGRESS WITHOUT SOCIAL PROGRESS IS NO PROGRESS."

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BILITY OF UNIONS TO SUPPORT TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT THAT HE SHOULD HAVE AT LEAST REFERRED TO THE RESPONSIBILITY OF EMPLOYERS TO SUPPORT SOCIAL PROGRESS. DGB PRESIDENT VETTER SUMMED UP THE FEELING OF THE CONGRESS WHEN HE SAID IN RESPONSE TO SCHEEL'S REMARKS THAT "TECHNICAL PROGRESS WITHOUT SOCIAL PROGRESS IS NO PROGRESS."

3. SCHMIDT SPEECH:

CHANCELLOR SCHMIDT EMPHASIZED THE UNEMPLOYMENT ISSUE
AND POINTED OUT THAT THE FIGHT AGAINST UNEMPLOYMENT IS
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NOT ONLY A TASK FOR THE GOVERNMENT, BUT IS A CHALLENGE
TO UNIONS, WORKERS AND EMPLOYERS AS WELL. HE ALSO
CALLED ON WORKERS TO BE MORE MOBILE IN SEEKING NEW
EMPLOYMENT AND FLEXIBLE ENOUGH TO LEARN NEW SKILLS
DURING THEIR WORKING LIFE. THE CHANCELLOR'S REMARKS
WERE BETTER RECEIVED THAN SCHEEL'S IN PART BECAUSE HE
CAME ON STRONG FOR CODETERMINATION AND WARNED AGAINST
MANAGEMENT EFFORTS TO WATER DOWN CODETERMINATION THROUGH
LEGAL MANIPULATIONS. THE CHANCELLOR'S SPEECH WAS ALMOST
ENTIRELY DEVOTED TO DOMESTIC ISSUES.

4. 35-HOUR WEEK:

IGNORING THE ADVICE OF THE RESOLUTIONS' COMMITTEE AND
THE WARNINGS OF THE UNION LEADERSHIP, THE DELEGATES,
BY MAJORITY VOTE, APPROVED A RESOLUTION PROPOSED BY THE
DGB YOUTH COMMITTEE WHICH CALLED FOR INTRODUCTION OF
THE 35-HOUR WEEK TO REDUCE YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT. THE
DELEGATES OVERLOOKED THE FACT THAT THE RESOLUTION WAS
COMPOSED OF DIFFERENT ELEMENTS AND THAT THE 35-HOUR
WEEK WAS ONLY ONE OF SEVERAL ISSUES ADDRESSED IN THE
RESOLUTION. ANOTHER ELEMENT WAS THE DEMAND FOR NATIO-
NALIZATION OF KEY INDUSTRIES, INCLUDING PRIVATE BANKING
AND INSURANCE COMPANIES. THE DGB LEADERSHIP WAS GREATLY
EMBARRASSED WHEN IT REALIZED WHAT HAD HAPPENED. FEARING
AN OUTBURST OF ANTI-UNION REACTION FROM THE PUBLIC WHICH
COULD HAVE POLITICAL REPERCUSSIONS, THE CONVENTIONS PRO-
CEEDINGS WERE HALTED AND A MEETING OF THE DGB EXECUTIVE
BOARD WAS HASTILY CONVENED. THE SOLUTION FINALLY WORKED
OUT WAS TO AMEND THE RESOLUTION TO SINGLE OUT THE 35-
HOUR WEEK ISSUE AS A DEMAND "FOR ACTION", WHILE REFERRING
THE REST OF THE RESOLUTION INCLUDING THE NATIONALIZATION
ISSUE "AS INFORMATION" TO THE DGB EXECUTIVE BOARD.
THE MAJORITY OF THE DELEGATES, SOMEWHAT SHOCKED BY
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THE RESULTS OF THEIR PREVIOUS VOTE, WENT ALONG WITH
THE RECOMMENDATION OF THE LEADERSHIP AND APPROVED THE
ALTERED RESOLUTION.

5. COMMENT: THE CONVENTION WAS ORDERLY, ROUTINE AND
VERY DOMESTIC-ISSUES ORIENTED. THE ONLY UNEXPECTED
INCIDENT WAS THE FLAP OVER THE 35-HOUR WEEK RESOLUTION

MENTIONED IN PARA 4 ABOVE.

THIS MESSAGE, WHICH IS A SELECTION OF HIGHLIGHTS OF
THE CONFERENCE, WILL BE FOLLOWED BY AN AIRGRAM WITH
MORE COMPLETE COVERAGE.
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